

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay From Nelson in Pendle

Mr. Billy Odge and Mr. Stanley Beaston were seasoned veterans of the Nelson Highways Department, known throughout the town as the Flagger Pavers. With decades of experience between them, they were true craftsmen of their trade, working diligently to pave the streets that criss-crossed their beloved town.

Each morning, they'd arrive at the depot, greeted by the familiar hum of the old tar boiler. It stood as a sentinel, its pipes and valves wheezing out hot, molten tar that would soon find its place between the well-worn setts. The two men worked in synchrony, a dance of skill and experience, spreading the tar with practiced precision.

Their hands were calloused, their backs strong from years of labour, but their eyes gleamed with a pride that only comes from knowing one's craft. They'd flag the pavements with the aged stone flags, worn by countless footsteps and weathered by the passage of time. The clinking sound of the hammer meeting the stone was a symphony to their ears, a testament to their dedication.

As the years passed, the winds of change swept through the town councils. They desired a more modern look, opting to replace the old stone with the sturdy concrete flags that promised durability. Billy and Stanley embraced the challenge, adapting their methods to accommodate the new material, all the while carrying with them the legacy of the past.

Yet, it was the green huts that held a special place in their hearts. These humble shelters stood like sentries on the edge of the work site, offering refuge when the heavens opened up. When rain poured down in a curtain, and the world outside was drenched, they'd retreat to these sanctuaries. It was in these moments, sheltered from the elements, that they'd share stories of jobs long finished, reminiscing about the days when the town wore a different face.

The huts were adorned with the marks of their history — faded photographs, weathered tools, and the unmistakable scent of tar. They were more than just shelters; they were havens of camaraderie, where the bonds of friendship grew stronger with each passing raindrop.

Through sun and rain, through the changing times and shifting landscapes, Mr. Billy Odge and Mr. Stanley Beaston remained the steadfast guardians of Nelson's roads. They were the keepers of tradition, the living embodiment of a time when craftsmanship was a badge of honour.

And as the sun set over the town, casting long shadows on the freshly paved streets, they stood together, surveying their work. Their hands may have been weathered, their faces lined with the marks of years gone by, but their spirits burned bright, carrying with them the pride of a job well done, knowing that the roads they paved would carry the stories of Nelson for generations to come.

By Donald Jay